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AUTHOR Sinatra, Richard
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ABSTRACT

Visual strategies that involve students in comprehending and writing processes while achieving whole-brain input can strengthen the bond between language and experience. Both the analytical, sequential, left brain hemisphere and the holistic, visual/spatial right brain hemisphere can be stimulated in oral and written expression through the use of three visual arrangement plans: in the lower grades, visual stories can acquaint young children with some of the major themes of literature and can illustrate character, plot, setting, and word; in the middle grades, pictures and visual patterns can be used to aid sentence combining practice; and in the upper grades, visual compositions can be arranged to help students achieve understanding of organizational patterns in writing. The visuals can be photographs or can be taken from filmstrips, picture book sources, or comics minus the dialogue. Visual compositions can be arranged to influence students to write narrative or steps in a process, description, comparison/contrast, enumeration, exposition, argumentation, or a combination of styles. Teachers should lead students through the following steps to implement any of these visual arrangements: (1) establish readiness, (2) form the main idea, (3) form the body of the composition, (4) write the composition, (5) review and share the compositions through several postwriting activities. As students learn to order visually, they learn to organize verbally, gaining greater facility in the organizational patterns of written discourse. (AEA)

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TITLE: Using Visuals in The Composing Process

BY: Richard Sinatra
Coordinator of Reading Programs
St. John's University
Jamaica, New York 11439

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USING VISUALS IN THE COMPOSING PROCESS

Pictures and film have traditionally been used by teachers of all grade levels to heighten students' perceptions and learning. Teachers of primary children sharpen young children's awareness of similarities and differences amongst objects and situations while matching language to perceived experiences. Reading and bilingual teachers use pictures to increase vocabulary and word level proficiency of students. English teachers can use photos and pictorial sequences such as those suggested by Sohn (1969, 1970) and Leavitt (1969) to increase students' visual awareness and to spark imaginative oral and written composition. Grade level and content teachers use films depicting historical events and scientific processes to enrich students' knowledge and conceptual development. In all of these examples, visuals bring the concrete world to the classroom. When teachers couple a visual mode of presentation with associated verbal explanation, they provide a powerful tool for thinking and language expansion.

Two areas of modern concern highlight the need for the increased use of visual literacy techniques as a way to strengthen composing and comprehending processes. One controversial area regards television viewing time and its effect upon learners. The second area regards modes of thinking and learning processes influenced by hemispheric dominance.

Viewing Behavior and Hemispheric Dominance

Few language programs have been developed that capitalize on the visual orientation of modern youth. Television in particular occupies a considerable amount of time in young people's lives. Childers and Ross pointed out in their review of middle elementary school pupils who

watched a mean number of 3.3 hours of television daily that the number of hours had changed very little over the previous twenty (20) years (1973). McCullough indicated that prior to the age of eighteen, the American teenager spent more time viewing television than in the classroom (1973). Rather than penalize children (and their parents!) for watching too much television, it may be more meaningful for teachers to capitalize on students' conditioned viewing behavior. Furthermore, both brain hemispheres have been stimulated by the visual-verbal experience.

Recent investigations in the area of brain functioning and hemispheric dominance tell us that each of the brain's hemispheres reacts to information presented to it in a different way (Zennausern, 1978; Keasey and Kelly, 1979). A kind of functional specialization has been assigned to each hemisphere dependent on how information is processed by that hemisphere. The left hemisphere is generally regarded as the specialist in speech and language functioning. The language arts activities of listening, speaking, reading and writing are primarily processed by the analytical, logical, and sequential functioning of the left hemisphere for most of our school-aged children whether they be right or left-handed. The right hemisphere appears to be specialized for holistic, visual-spatial and affective associations.

Students will differ in the way they perform at various tasks dependent on how information is processed in the dominant hemisphere. Those who perform better at verbal and language-related tasks may be considered to be left dominant. Those who seem to perform better at visual-spatial tasks for which the right hemisphere is organized may be considered to be right dominant. Right dominants show high interest in

visual stimuli and are addicted television watchers, finding cartoons, science fiction, and vivid visual programs a highly motivating and satisfying experience (Fadley and Hosler, 1979). Furthermore, the ability to think in visual images is apparently associated with right hemispheric functioning and may be the recall strategy of right hemisphere dominants (Coleman and Zenhausern, 1979).

However, schools do not seem to reward and encourage right brain-dominant children. The many school activities dominated by reading and writing participation are channeled through left-brained input and output systems. Children who may learn better through right-brained input are conditioned to use their left brains without opportunities to process the same information through the more dominant hemisphere (Hunter, 1977). Furthermore, it is to these right brain-dominant children that the labels "slow," "incapable," or "learning disabled" may be attached.

Television and other visual and audio-visual media have acted as dual input systems to brain hemispheres from the birth of most children. The screen's message has been beamed to the child's right hemisphere while the accompanying text has been processed by the left. However, during formal schooling, it is primarily to the left hemisphere that input is broadcast.

Communication Participants

Brain processing occurs while viewing visuals and engaging in language arts activities in order to decode and encode messages. Transmitters of information encode messages while receivers of information decode messages to understand design and intent. Composers and specialists in the visual media field can be compared to writers in their roles as transmitters of information. They strive for unity, coherence, and

smooth transition in presenting messages to engage the senses, affect and credibility of audiences. Readers and viewers also participate in similar mental processes. As receivers of information, readers and viewers focus attention to code or process the message. Thus, the following analagous relationship can be said to exist for participants in the communication process:

READING : WRITING :: VIEWING : VISUAL COMPOSING

Reading depends on learning to analyze graphic features and interpret the written language code, primarily a left hemisphere mode of processing. Viewing relies on the ability to interpret the whole composition, primarily right hemisphere functioning. When sequences of pictures are viewed, both right and left hemispheric processing occurs. The right synthesizes each picture whole while the left sequences the separate meanings in a coordinated, logical plan. Thus, picture sequences provide a means of achieving coordination between holistic and analytic processing.

A Visual Strategy Plan

The language arts teacher can restructure the analagous relationship amongst communication participants to present a visual strategy plan that incorporates receptive and expressive processing while achieving cooperation between hemispheric functioning (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Arranging Visuals to Engage Pupil Receptive/Expressive Processing Modes

Teacher Strategy	Pupil Processing Mode			
	Viewing →	Composing →	Writing →	Reading
Arranging Visual Compositions →	receptive processing Visual holistic input	expressive processing Coupling visual images with language	expressive processing Applying written language code to express meaning	receptive processing reconstructing the written code to gain meaning

The plan calls for the use and structuring of visual compositions to aid pupil, viewing, composing, writing, and comprehending processes. A visual composition is a sequence of pictures that tells or infers a complete story or theme. Any life experience that can be captured in pictures could provide subject matter for a visual story. The objective in structuring a visual composition is to unify a series of single pictures into a meaningful whole so that students could use language to logically compose the story seen in the visual sequence. Visual stories can come from any number of sources. They can be composed through the technique of photography or they can be researched and taken from film strips or picture book sources; magazines, brochures, newspapers, advertisements, old books, etc. Some programs advocate that young children compose their own visual compositions after they review vocabulary words around the activities they plan to photograph (Debes and Williams, 1974).

Notice that film or movies are not recommended since the accompanying dialogue provides language cues for students. In this visual strategy plan, the student actively uses his own words and sentence structures to achieve greater facility in composing themes and under-

standing them when they appear in reading. The visuals provide a concrete stimuli to bridge the gap between idea and visualization of the idea.

A key strategy in the arranging of visuals is that the visuals provide concrete stimuli for the formation of imagery. While viewing the picture sequence, students see a unified visual message unfold before their eyes. As they begin to compose in writing, the holistic impression of the picture sequence remains in the "mind's eye." Revisualization of individual images occurs to contribute to the meaning of the whole. Words and sentence structures are then recalled to match in writing what the young composer senses the visual message means.

The plan also achieves right-brain hemispheric input and may aid the language functioning of students who appear to be weak in verbal expression alone. However, even children who perform well in reading and writing activities will profit from the combined input approach. The research of Dimond and Beaumont (1971) indicated that when both hemispheres were activated in a task, a greater learning potential was achieved than when only one hemisphere was activated. Haber's experiment showed that recall of pictorial stimuli was essentially unlimited (1970). His findings suggested that if words could be attached to visual images, overall recall might dramatically improve. When teachers stimulate right-brain processing through the use of pictures and the encouragement of mental imagining, recall and comprehension improve as children learn to construct pictorial frameworks for new words, concepts, and stories (Fox, 1979).

In summary, the visual strategy plan incorporates coordination of receptive and expressive language processing, dual inputs of left

and right hemispheric functioning, and capitalizes on the motivating, conditioned behavior of viewing.

Visual Compositions

There are three general ways that language arts teachers can use visuals and visual compositions to help students use imaginative words, construct meaningful sentences, and to organize composition.

1. In the lower grades, teachers can use visual stories to acquaint young children with some of the major themes of literature. Single pictures or picture series can illustrate character, plot, setting, and word. Children compose oral compositions as they view and discuss the pictures. Spatial organization may be featured in outlining a character portrayal, a scene, or feelings about a particular theme, while chronologic organization would coordinate events in a plot. Children would sense the meanings of words such as "beyond," "near," "alongside," etc. in organizing spatial relationships within pictures, while time-order words such as "next," "before," "after," "finally," etc. would connect sequential ideas seen in the visual development of a plot. For instance, a series of pictures that tells an action story would be easy to use. The idea would be quite similar to comic book format. In fact, comic strips (minus the dialogue) projected one-by-one on the overhead would serve as a high motivating device to develop sequence, an important factor of reading comprehension.

Once the oral compositions have been elicited, the story could be prepared in experience chart format, the written product of combined oral and visual input. Reading the story may be quite easy for many children since recall of the visual and oral sequences strengthens the reading of the words in the sentences.

2. In the middle grades, language arts teachers can use pictures and visual patterns to aid sentence-combining practice. Researchers have shown that practice with oral and written sentence-combining exercises promotes more syntactically mature sentences (Stotsky, 1975; Combs, 1977). Practice with manipulating sentence elements may be considered an intermediary stage in composition development. The child's attention is directed to applying a syntactic feature that will combine the words and content already given in the kernel sentences.

In using visuals, however, the vocabulary will be supplied by the child while the content will be inferred through pictorial interpretation. Moreover, the teacher could supply a visual pattern of the new sentence to be constructed. For example, if the focus were on the development of subordinate relationships expressed in adverb clauses, the teacher might initially "assign" the particular subordinating conjunction to use. The visual pattern for the intended construction would be shown in two ways:

Pattern 1. _____ when_____.

Pattern 2. When_____, _____.

The teacher would point out that either pattern can be used, that each pattern gives equivalent meaning to the ideas the sentence will contain, and that the use of the comma (a visual cue) is required if the "when" clause comes first. By presenting a series of at least two pictures that infer the time relationship of "when," students can complete either one of the visual patterns and achieve subordinate/independent

sentence construction.

Display student sentences on the chalkboard or on an overhead projector. Students will share each other's sentences, commenting about the different meanings achieved using the same sentence pattern. The pictures and the visual patterns serve to keep the experience fresh in the minds of all children while stimulating them to achieve syntactic fluency.

3. In the upper grades, language arts teachers can arrange visual compositions to help older students achieve understanding of organizational patterns in writing. The four traditional categories of discourse - narration, description, exposition and argumentation - can provide a general framework for the organization of visual compositions as they do for written composition. While Fransecky and Debes (1972) have suggested a dozen ways that visuals might be organized to correspond with styles of writing, I have found the use of seven (7) visual arrangements suitable to my expertise with the camera. Once I photograph a number of pictures about some event or scene, I arrange slides to tell the picture story in a certain way. The advantage of slides is that they can be used for a whole class group. However, other picture sources; magazines, newspapers, brochures could supply scores of pictures that could be adapted for use with individuals and small groups.

The most important aspect to consider is how the visuals will be arranged. The goal of the visual composer is to arrange pictures to influence the composition and comprehending processes of the viewer.

The following chart illustrates seven (7) arrangements of visual compositions and the style of writing that may be achieved by students.

Chart 1. Visual Arrangements and Corresponding Writing Style

Visual Arrangement	Writing Style Intended
Showing events in a sequence or steps in a process. All sports events, contests, adventures, and process-oriented activities show action occurring in sequence.	Narrative and Steps-in-a-Process Narrative and process-oriented construction in which the unifying element is chronology or time-order develops. The writer focuses on step-by-step telling of events or sequence. During initial training, it is helpful to introduce students to use of transition words and phrases that carry the direction of thought forward.
Arranging a descriptive scene to show how people, places or things are positioned in the scene. Movement of visuals could be from near to far, left to right, part to whole, etc.	Description The writer describes the features in the scene while organizing how each thing is positioned in relation to the other. To coordinate the position of objects, characters, and details, students could be aided by the use of conjunctions and adverbs (transitional elements) that help relate spatial orientation.
Showing likenesses and differences among people, events, surroundings with sets of two or more pictures.	Comparison/Contrast The comparison/contrast writing technique is fostered. Students point out how things are similar or different. Introducing coordinating conjunctions that indicate contrast such as "but" and "however" aid the technique of contrast.
Showing a number of items that belong to the same group or class.	Enumeration Enumeration of the items may occur in writing with the topic sentence naming the group to which the items belong. Other students may define or describe the items.
Focusing on one central idea or theme and including enough visuals to develop that theme. For instance, by showing the damaging effects caused by a storm, a cause and effect relationship is portrayed. Presenting pictures of the ways that	Exposition A number of expository patterns may be developed here, i.e., problem solution, cause and effect, development by illustration or examples. Time-order arrangement may be featured in writing style while development of the theme occurs.

Chart 1. - continued

Visual Arrangement	Writing Style Intended
wind can move objects infers the central idea of the wind's force.	
Focusing on characters who appear to be involved in a controversy or highlighting one character who seems to be persuading another to act a certain way. Try using the pictures of advertisements and repeating a picture that illustrates the persuasive theme.	Argumentation The student may use the style of argumentation or persuasion in developing the composition. Specific reasons may be noted in the details. A dialogue may be written between characters outlining the points of the argument or controversy.
Combining visual arrangements to achieve a more detailed visual story. For instance, the sequence of an event can be shown while additional pictures can highlight the surroundings or locale in which one part of the event occurred.	Combination of Styles Several writing styles may be achieved. Narrative-descriptive writing is rather easy to achieve. Students tell the particular story in sequential fashion while stopping to describe places or scenes in which the action occurred.

Both group and individual involvement occurs with the use of each visual composition. The entire group initially participates in the same visual experience and this common base aids the review procedure conducted by the teacher at the end of the activity. During the composing and writing stages, however, each member of the group interprets and organizes the visual experience in his/her own way. All students seem to achieve a literal level of meaning and can write a paper telling about what they saw. Some students react more creatively to the visual theme and organize a composition that goes beyond the intent of the visual arrangement.

Furthermore, various levels of mechanical competency will be achieved through the use of visual arrangements. Mechanical control of the written language affects the more creative aspects of composition. The visuals appear to stimulate both language and ideas - the creative aspects of composition. Mechanical difficulties connected with spelling, punctuation and grammatical usage will appear in visually provoked compositions as they would in any composition assignment. However, students may find it easier to correct word and sentence errors with a clear visual referent in mind.

To implement any of the visual arrangements listed in Chart 1, while accomplishing group and individual involvement in the composing and comprehending process, the following steps are suggested:

a. Readiness

Tell students that they will write compositions a new way based on the arrangement and sequencing of pictures. Ask them to use their own words and sentences to explain the meaning they sense in the visual arrangement. Ask them also to consider how the visual sequence is organized so that they can later organize their written composition to model the organization of the visual sequence.

b. Forming the Main Idea

Show the entire visual composition at a fairly rapid pace so that students get a sense of the whole meaning. When completed, ask them to compose one sentence that captures the overall meaning of that theme.

Each student will form his/her own concept of the main idea. Some will write a rather literal sentence while others may compose a more interpretive or creative sentence that indicates their point-of-view toward the theme. For instance, after viewing eleven (11) slides of a bullfight sequence, most students wrote main idea sentences like:

"The arena was filled with people waiting for the bullfight to begin."

"The spectacle of a bullfight is exciting from beginning to end."

"The people still pour into the Stadium as the day's bullfight is about to begin."

Notice how each student was setting the stage for narrative development which was my major intent in using the bullfight sequence. One student wrote, however,

> "The brevity of life is portrayed
> by a bullfight."

These examples are not selected to suggest that one student is "better" at composition than another, but to illustrate the importance of establishing one's overall concept of how the theme will be developed. The body of the composition must remain consistent with the stated main idea.

c. Forming the Body of the Composition

Now show the visual sequence at a slower pace, allowing from three (3) to five (5) minutes for the viewing of each picture or slide. Ask students to jot down sentences or notes about ideas in each picture that relate to their perception of the theme (as established in the second step). For this activity, I've generally prepared a worksheet. Several blank lines near the top indicate that the main idea sentence should be recorded there. The remainder of the page contains numbered lines to correspond to the number of pictures in the sequence. Initially, I want students to write something about each picture to provoke language and to stimulate writing.

d. Writing the Composition

Students need the remainder of a class period or time during an ensuing period to compose and polish the composition. Since they will be able to visualize the individual pictures of the sequence, they will have clear visual images which will stimulate specific words and sentence structures. Many times students will combine ideas noted in several visuals to form a more mature, extended sentence. Having students refer to lists of transition words and phrases may be helpful in the early stages of writing. Transitional elements help students achieve smooth, coordinated movement between ideas.

Remind students of their initial main idea sentence which established a unifying structure for their composition. All other sentences should build on the central idea established in the foundation sentence. Many students will rewrite the composition before turning it in for review. Remind them to proofread and to check for clarity of expression.

e. Reviewing and Sharing the Compositions

By using this visual composition plan, the teaching

about composition follows student involvement in the process of composition. During this final step, the teacher plays a major role in stimulating language growth, in aiding composition development, and in strengthening the comprehending process in reading. Teaching options and strategies are numerous. An additional period or two may be needed if enthusiasm and interest runs high. Once papers are returned, the following suggestions are offered as the culminating activity of the visual strategy plan.

1. A major effort may be directed to the style of writing achieved through the organization of the picture sequence. Read aloud specific papers that captured the style intended by the visual arrangement or reshow the entire visual sequence once again, commenting on the organization implied by the arrangement of the visual sequences. Those that did not achieve that particular organization in their writing may sense the organizational pattern now. This learning may be transferred to future writing and reading activities.

2. Have selected students read paragraphs aloud or have a student's composition projected on the overhead. Since the visual experience is common to all, one student will be better able to visualize how another expressed the same idea, scene, action, or theme. Generate discussion on "how" something was said. Discuss a sentence's appropriateness or lack of it. Using their papers in this way strengthens the bond between the receptive and expressive aspects of the communication process.

3. Have specific sentences read aloud from other papers that captured a poingant meaning or mood from a particular picture. A combination of such creative sentences could form a separate "ideal" paragraph for that sequence.

4. Point out the concreteness or vividness of word choice to describe a particular scene or event. Enrich vocabulary understanding by using words that best describe a scene or action.

5. Develop the use of figurative language to portray a certain meaning. Oftentimes, students will use figures of speech since concrete images were fresh in their minds. For instance, one student wrote, "A mountain is like a giant with grey hair," to describe the Matterhorn.

6. Concentrate on the transition between pictures and how specific student's used transitional elements, pronouns, sentence inversions to achieve smooth transition in writing.

7. Work on sentence construction by illustrating how students could combine ideas from several shots to form one sentence.

8. Finally, devote time to the reading of the same style from other sources. Select paragraphs that illustrate the style of writing students just completed in the visual/writing exercise. Since each student saw a visual organization of that discourse, she/he may be able to perceive this structure more readily in reading experiences. Understanding the internal structure of written organization, strengthens the comprehending process (Herber, 1970).

CONCLUSION:

The visual strategies suggested in this paper involve students in comprehending and writing processes while achieving whole-brain input. Visual-verbal associations are made to strengthen the bond between language and experience. All children will be stimulated in oral and written expression through the use of the three visual arrangement plans. Many of these self-same children will also gain greater facility in the organizational patterns of written discourse. As they learned to order visually, they learned how to organize verbally. Furthermore, in ensuing reading lessons, a particular author's style or organizational framework may be easier to understand since students had participated in the construction of that style. The teacher capitalizes on the group's common visual base and the involvement process in which each student participated. The visual strategy plans are quite compatible to Moffett's model of interactive learning (1973). He contended that the real aim of language arts instruction was to show children how to capture experience in words. Visual composition plans can deliver that goal ... and more.

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